

Contents and Format for Departmental Record Keeping

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Policy: 700.0065

Effective Date: March 17, 1986 Revised Date: May 15, 1989 Version: 3

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families has devised a standardized format for case recording, case record content, and case record organization (Training School, Community Resources, and Adoption Subsidy records are excepted). This system is designed to accommodate all case specific information sought and maintained by the various divisions. Possessing separate personal records, notes, duplicate files, or any information received from and/or about persons currently or previously involved with the Department is prohibited. It is the intent of the Department through this record keeping system to make all Departmental records uniform (except where indicated above) and to consolidate all case-related information where possible into one (1) permanent family record.

The active DCYF case record is a hard cover three-ring (3) binder with ten (10) pre-printed index dividers. Information is incorporated into each record section as outlined on the back of each divider (10) index dividers shall remain with the record even after all family members have been closed to service. However, once the last child has been closed to service, the contents of the permanent family record (including dividers) are removed from the binder and are placed in a manila folder for storage. The binder is then reused for other active cases.

Ongoing dictation for most service units is stored in the "Narrative" section of the case record. However, special record sections ("CPS" and "Special Services") have been included to accommodate closed dictation for specific units (CPS, Probation, MHSCY, and at times Assessment) as well as adoption materials in certain situations. When the "Special Services" section is used, dictation for each involvement with the Department shall be preceded by a cover sheet indicating to whom the material relates, the service unit, and the dates of involvement (ex. John Smith, Assessment, 1-1-85 to 2-1-85).

At times there may be concurrent involvement of two (2) or more units in the Department with a particular child or family. This shall necessitate maintaining more than one (1) case record during this concurrent involvement. In such situations (excluding CPS, Training School, and Community Resources where separate records shall continue to be maintained) one (1) record shall be designated as the permanent family record (i.e. the record of that worker assigned family responsibility) and all other records are designated as temporary. All material maintained in a temporary record, excluding the Adoption Placement Unit and/or those records of children where termination of parental rights has occurred, must eventually be incorporated into the permanent family record.

Only those cases opened or reopened after March 17, 1986, shall undergo mandatory conversion into the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format. All other case records can be voluntarily converted or can remain in the previous case record format (exception: if concurrent involvement is initiated on cases in the old case record format, the entire case

record must be converted to the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format). New cases (no previous involvement with the Department) are set up in the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format by the unit initiating services. Re-openings (closed cases in the old record format) are first converted when possible by DCYF Record Center staff before the unit initiating services incorporates the reopening material into the record.

Certain case situations necessitate setting up a new case record for a child or family. If a minor currently active with the Department subsequently gives birth and that infant becomes active, a new record (including a new RICHIST number) is established for that infant and the minor mother as a family unit. Another situation necessitating a new case record is termination of parental rights. Once termination of parental rights has been granted on both parents, that child must then be separated out of the case record of his/her family of origin and a new case record is established for that child. All relevant case materials relating specifically to that child (i.e. documents, forms) are removed from the family record and are filed in the appropriate record sections of his/her new record. This does not include Case Plan/ Agreements or correspondence, court letters, hearing notices, forms such as 005s and any other forms or documents dated prior to the TPR and not relevant to planning for the child's current situation. Dictation is not copied from the biological family record. A new Face Sheet is developed. The child retains his/her RICHIST number, but new dictation and any new material regarding that child shall be filed in the child's new record. However, after the effective date of this policy, any such child who is subsequently adopted shall be assigned a new RICHIST number whether or not a subsidy is involved.

Case record binders can be stored in standard file cabinets (spine up). Tab holders have been attached to the spine of each binder to display identifying case information. Because active cases opened to the Department prior to March 17, 1986 are not mandated to be converted to the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format (except where indicated within), these records, where applicable, shall continue to be stored in secure file systems. However, all case records shall be stored in manila folders upon closing and shall be sent to the DCYF Record Center for storage. The exception to this is those case situations where a family member continues to be serviced by the Department (except CPS, Community Resources, and Adoption Placement Unit). In these situations the closed file is sent to the active worker so that all material can be consolidated into one (1) family record. No partial record shall ever be sent to the DCYF Record Center for storage nor shall Record Center employees be expected to consolidate such records for storage.

Effective May 15, 1989 staff will utilize the Case Profile System for all cases opened to service as of that date. For existing cases, staff will use the Case Profile Needs Assessment Checklist as they review their cases for subsequent case plan development; the use of Profile Narratives is not mandated for existing cases.

While the Training School may be in possession of all or part of the permanent family record, this record shall at no time be incorporated into the RITS record. As the RITS has a record destruction policy in place, all materials and records sent from any other

division of DCYF to the RITS must be returned to the DCYF Record Center upon discharge from the RITS if the child and family are closed to services. This is to safeguard against destruction of certain materials which must be maintained by law. If the child continues to need Departmental services at the time of discharge from the RITS, material and records, including copies of updated information generated by the Training School shall be sent to the receiving worker/counselor who will be providing service to the child. If there is concurrent servicing by two (2) or more units with the child/family, record consolidation shall eventually take place as described in the above mentioned policy.

Related Procedures

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Case Record

Procedure From Policy 700.0065: Contents and Format for Departmental Record Keeping

- A. The DCYF case record is a hard cover, three-ring (3) binder with ten (10) pre-printed index dividers outlining the contents of each record section:
1. Case record binders come in two (2) sizes to accommodate the varying amounts of material accumulated in case records over time;
 2. There is a clear plastic insert attached to the spine of each binder in which shall be inserted a tab on which is typed:
 - a. Surname(s) of all family members;
 - b. Name of each parent/guardian;
 - c. Name(s) of child(ren); and
 - d. RICHIST number.
 3. Case record binders are used only while the case is being serviced:
 - a. The binders are designed to be reused for other cases;
 - b. Closed cases are to be removed from the binder (including dividers) and are to be stored in manila folders; and
 - c. Empty binders generated by most Family Services closings shall be returned to Intake for use in subsequent cases. However, those units generally responsible for their own openings (ex. Probation, MHSCY) shall retain the empty binders for subsequent use.
 4. Case record dividers have been designed to consolidate all record materials into specific record sections:
 - a. Pre-printed record sections include:
 - (1) Narrative;
 - (2) Case Plan/Case Plan Review/Social Summary;
 - (3) Reports and Evaluations;
 - (4) Medical/Dental;
 - (5) Legal;
 - (6) Correspondence;
 - (7) Special Forms/Documents;
 - (8) CPS;
 - (9) Special Services; and
 - (10) RICHIST.
 - b. On the back of each divider is printed the specific forms, documents, or other material to be incorporated into that section as well as instructions on how such material is to be filed. Updates as to what material belongs in each section are included in this procedure:
 - (1) Two (2) dividers, "Legal" and "Special Forms/Documents," are actually envelopes in which are stored specific documents or other material which cannot be three-hole (3) punched;

- (2) As changes in policy occur or as new forms are developed, instructions for incorporation into the case record are provided;
 - (3) Effective May 15, 1989, the following changes are to be implemented:
 - (a) Contact Sheets, Contact Result Sheets and Assessment summaries prior to May 15, 1989 are filed in the Narrative Section behind the DCYF #001 Face Sheet;
 - (b) Social Summaries prior to May 15, 1989 are filed in the Case Plan/Review/Social Summary Section under the heading Previous DCYF/CWS Social Summaries (narrative);
 - (c) After May 15, 1989 Case Profile Needs Assessment Checklists (DCYF #147) are filed in the Case Plan/Review/Social Summary Section following the DCYF #082 Notification of Right to Appeal; and
 - (d) After May 15, 1989 Case Profile Narratives (DCYF #148) are filed in the Case Plan/Review/Social Summary Section following the DCYF #147 Case Profile Needs Assessment Checklists.
 - (4) Contact Result Sheets (DCYF #076) will no longer be used. Material which is to be filed by individual rather than by family should be separated by a cover sheet describing the material, to whom it belongs, and when applicable the date(s) (example, Psychiatric Evaluation, John Smith, 1-7-85).
- c. In each record section no more than one (1) copy of any particular form, document, or letter shall be retained:
- (1) Any duplicate material in current or previously existing and reopened records shall be removed and destroyed; and
 - (2) For any document or form which is periodically revised or time-limited (ex. Case Plan/Agreement, court decree), one (1) copy of each original and update shall be filed in the appropriate record section as documentation of prior case events.
- d. Case record dividers are designed to be a permanent part of the family record and are to remain with the case record contents regardless of case activity.

Child and/or Family Opened or Reopened to the Department after March 17, 1986

Procedure From Policy 700.0065: Contents and Format for Departmental Record Keeping

- A. For any child and/or family opened or reopened to the Department after March 17, 1986, all materials presently and previously accumulated regarding that child and/or family (except Community Resources, Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption, and original CPS records) shall be consolidated into one (1) permanent family record which adheres to the specified case record format:
1. All case records shall be associated with the biological/adoptive mother, living or dead, regardless of her current whereabouts or involvement with the child(ren):
 - a. All children listed in the "Children" section of the Face Sheet (DCYF #001) must share the same mother; and
 - b. If the involved children in a family household do not share the same mother (i.e. natural child and step-child), a separate record must be opened and maintained for that child or children who have a different mother under that mother's name.
 2. All currently active case records opened prior to March 17, 1986 are not subject to but may be voluntarily converted into the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format:
 - a. If concurrent involvement is initiated after March 17, 1986 (example: new child opened in Assessment in family active in Generic), the entire family record shall be converted to the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format once the temporary record is transferred to the active family worker; and
 - b. If workers opt to voluntarily convert their active cases, this should be coordinated through their supervisor to ensure proper conversion, sufficient storage, and adequate caseload coverage.
 3. Though at times it may be necessary to maintain more than one (1) case record on an individual or family due to concurrent servicing by two (2) or more units within the Department, all information shall eventually be consolidated into one (1) permanent family record (except Community Resources, Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption, and original CPS records):
 - a. The record of that worker/counselor assigned family responsibility shall be designated as the permanent family record and all other records are designated as temporary;
 - b. All material maintained in a temporary record must eventually be incorporated into the permanent record:
 - (1) If the worker/counselor in possession of the permanent record is the last to service the family, he/she shall be responsible to consolidate other material into that record;

- (2) If the worker/counselor in possession of the permanent family record terminates involvement with the family prior to the concurrent worker, he/she shall send the permanent record to that other worker:
 - (a) The other worker shall then incorporate his/her material into the permanent record; and
 - (b) If the permanent record to be sent is not in the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format, that record shall be converted to the new format prior to it being sent.
- (3) Although ongoing dictation for most service units is stored in the "Narrative" section, special record sections ("CPS" and "Special Services") have been created to accommodate closed dictation for specific units (CPS, Probation, MHSCY, and at times Assessment) as well as adoption materials in certain situations when there has been prior involvement, concurrent involvement, or is subsequent involvement with another unit in the Department (except CPS, and Community Resources):
 - (a) This applies to Assessment only when a new child is opened in Assessment in a family currently active in Family Services (Generic); and
 - (b) In all situations where the "Special Services" section is utilized, dictation for each involvement shall be preceded by a cover sheet indicating to whom the material relates, the service unit, and the dates of involvement (ex. John Smith, Assessment, 1-1-85 to 2-1-85).
- c. When concurrent involvement is initiated, the worker/counselor who is not in possession of the permanent family record may need to review that record for background information:
 - (1) The worker/supervisor shall arrange with the family worker/supervisor to review the record as soon as possible;
 - (2) The assigned family worker/supervisor shall make the record available for in-house review no later than two (2) working days following the request;
 - (3) Any request to send all or any part of the permanent family record elsewhere must have prior approval of the Administrator/Assistant Director who has overall responsibility for that record; and
 - (4) If a record is sent out for review, it shall be returned to the assigned family worker within three (3) working days.
- d. At times it is possible that a service unit within the Department may be preparing to close a child to service or transfer a case to another unit and CPS initiates an investigation:

- (1) If the CPS investigation is on the same child, the service unit must await the outcome of the investigation and must provide such interim and/or subsequent services as become necessary;
 - (2) If the CPS investigation is on a new child, the service unit must await the outcome of the investigation before terminating involvement or transferring the case, but is not responsible to provide services to that child or family unless responsibility is assigned under existing policy; and
 - (3) Regardless of what child the investigation involves, the case record must be made available for review by CPS.
4. Responsibility for formation of the new case record depends upon the type of case being opened:
- a. New cases (no previous involvement with the Department) are the responsibility of the unit initiating services;
 - b. Reopenings (closed existing case record) are handled as follows:
 - (1) The unit initiating services shall request the closed record through the DCYF Record Center;
 - (2) The Record Center staff shall convert any record not currently in the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format and shall place all records in the binder:
 - (a) Existing records from multiple service units involving a particular child or family (except Training School, Community Resources, Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption records, or CPS) must be consolidated into one (1) family record;
 - (b) Record Center employees shall follow the case record format as detailed within when converting all existing case records; and
 - (c) While every effort shall be made to centralize such record formation with the DCYF Record Center, the unit initiating services will at times be required to convert select records when Record Center employees are unable to do so.
 - (3) The unit initiating services shall incorporate all re-opening material into this record.
 - c. New child/active family may require the temporary or permanent formation of two (2) case records:
 - (1) If the new child is to be serviced initially by a worker other than the one currently servicing the rest of the family, record formation for that new child becomes the responsibility of that unit initiating service;
 - (2) Although such new records will be in the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format the existing family record may be in the old format:

- (a) If the record of the new child is subsequently transferred to the existing family worker, the existing family record must then be converted by that family worker; and
 - (b) If the existing family worker is transferring family responsibility to the new worker, he/she may convert the family record prior to transfer.
- (3) If a minor currently active with the Department subsequently gives birth and that infant becomes active, a separate record is established for that infant and mother as a family Unit:
 - (a) Responsibility for record formation rests with the unit initiating services to that infant;
 - (b) The record for the infant shall be assigned a new RICHIST number which is cross-referenced to the minor mother's existing record. A separate binder is used for the infant's record;
 - (c) Contacts are separately dictated and material is filed in each record contingent upon which family unit it involves (i.e. minor mother and her parents/minor mother and her child);
 - (d) The minor mother retains her own record as a child as long as she continues to be serviced as a child. There is no need or mandate to convert this record if in the old record format; and
 - (e) At no time shall the material from these two (2) records be consolidated into one (1) record.
- d. Once termination of parental rights has been granted on both parents, the assigned primary service worker must formulate a new case record for that child whether or not responsibility for that child is to remain with that worker or is to be transferred elsewhere. To properly prepare a child determined to be appropriate for adoption, a thorough knowledge of how the case came to the Department and the course of the Department's work is essential to the workers seeking an adoptive home. It is important to establish a new record at the time of TPR, have available previous family information to best prepare for adoption, and eliminate the needless duplication of records. The same protocol for new record development is followed in the case of direct consent adoptions:
 - (1) Dictation from the biological family record shall not be copied for inclusion into the new case record:
 - (a) Subsequent dictation from the time of TPR will be included in the Narrative Section of the new case record;

- (b) When the case is appropriate for transfer to the Adoption Placement Unit the new case record is forwarded to the APU Administrator;
 - (c) The APU may request the biological family record for review of background information from the Record Center if the family record has been closed;
 - (d) If there is concurrent involvement and the biological family record remains open, the APU may access the family record; and
 - (e) A new Face Sheet shall be placed in the Narrative Section including reference to the TPR in the Legal Action Section.
- (2) All case materials relating specifically to that child (i.e., documents, forms) shall be removed from the family record and shall be filed in the appropriate record sections. Case Plan/Agreements prior to termination shall remain with the family record as shall correspondence, court letters, hearing notices, forms such as 005s and any other forms or documents dated prior to the TPR and not relevant to planning for the child's current situation;
- (3) The child retains his/her RICHIST number but dictation and any new material regarding that child shall be filed in the child's new record;
- (4) If the child is subsequently adopted, he/she shall be assigned a new RICHIST number whether or not a subsidy is involved:
- (a) The new RICHIST number shall reflect the child's name change, legal status, and new parent information;
 - (b) The new RICHIST number shall be cross-referenced to the child's family of origin;
 - (c) If the adoptive family already has an existing RICHIST number, that number shall be used for the new child. The child shall be assigned the next numbered sequence. The child's dictation should be filed in the "Special Services" section of the existing adoptive family record. Documents, forms, correspondence, etc. shall be filed in the appropriate record sections. A notation should be made on the face sheet of the incorporation of the child's material;
 - (d) If the adoption is not subsidized, all RICHIST changes (request for new number, new identifying information, final adoption entry, and closing entry) can be submitted to Information Systems on one (1) RICHIST form. The worker must be careful to

- enter the correct Adoption code. All changes must be made in the child's record (i.e. Face Sheet information, new RICHIST number, etc.) before that record is sent to the DCYF Record Center for storage. The RICHIST turnaround document reflecting these changes must be filed in the closed record before it is sent for storage;
- (e) If the adoption is subsidized, all RICHIST changes (request for new number, new identifying information, subsidy information, change of worker, etc.) can be submitted to Information Systems on one (1) RICHIST form. The worker must be careful to enter the correct Adoption Subsidy code. Because the child's record will be stored and a separate subsidy file used, all changes must be made in the child's record (i.e. Face Sheet information, new parent information, new RICHIST number, etc.) before that record is sent to the DCYF Record Center for storage.
- (3) The RICHIST turnaround document reflecting these changes must be filed in the child's record before it is sent for storage:
 - (a) One copy will be sent by Information Systems to the Adoption Subsidy Administrator for incorporation into the Adoption Subsidy record; and
 - (b) One copy will be sent by Information Systems to the last worker of record for incorporation into the child's record.
 - (4) Upon termination of an Adoption Subsidy case by the Department, all contents of the Adoption Subsidy record shall be forwarded to the DCYF Record Center for incorporation into the child's permanent record;
 - (5) If parental rights have been terminated but that child is not subsequently adopted, that child's record shall still remain separate from his/her family of origin for confidentiality purposes. All contacts regarding that child shall be recorded in the child's record only. Upon closing that child to the Department, his/her record shall be stored in a separate folder in the DCYF Record Center even though his/her RICHIST number matches that of his/her family of origin;
 - (6) It is possible that a family who has undergone a Termination of Parental Rights may again become active with the Department at a later date. If the original family case record is to be reopened, the worker should be aware that dictation in this record will contain information about

the child previously removed from the home. Access to such information is classified as "Restrictive" and is limited by Departmental policy; and

- (7) If an adoptive family voluntarily terminates their involvement with an adopted child or if their parental rights are terminated by the court, the assigned primary service worker will formulate a new case record.
5. Any previous record being converted into the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format shall adhere to the following:
- a. Dictation shall be filed in the "Narrative" section as appropriate:
 - (1) Family dictation (prior to 5/15/89) shall be filed directly behind the Face Sheet;
 - (2) Closed child sections of currently active children (including the pink child Face Sheet used in the former record keeping system) shall be filed directly behind the previous family dictation;
 - (3) Closed child sections of children not currently active shall be filed in the back of the case record behind the RICHIST documentation;
 - (4) Ongoing dictation recorded after 5/15/89 in the new dictation format shall be filed in the "Narrative" section behind the closed child sections (if applicable);
 - (5) If there has been previous involvement with Probation, or MHSCY, closed dictation from these units shall be filed in the "Special Services" section; and
 - (6) If dictation from another case record is filed in the family record (ex. the child section of the parent who was previously involved with the Department as a child), that dictation shall either be destroyed (if a copy) or returned to the appropriate family record (if the original).
 - b. One (1) copy of each form, document, or letter shall be retained and filed chronologically in the appropriate record section (as indicated on each case record divider):
 - (1) Multiple copies of any particular form, document, or letter shall be removed from the case record and destroyed;
 - (2) Copies of previous federal reporting forms (SSRS) and Transaction Sheets shall be removed and destroyed; and
 - (3) Any handwritten notes, scraps of paper, or other extraneous material which is not germane to current case activity shall, with supervisory approval, be removed from the case record and destroyed.
 - c. Case Profile Needs Assessment Checklists and Profile Narratives shall be filed in reverse chronological order in the section designated for Case Plan/Review/Social Summary. Social Summaries completed prior to 5/15/89 shall be filed in this section

under the heading Previous DCYF/CWS Social Summaries (narratives);

- d. A Case Record Audit (DCYF #114) shall be placed in each record in front of the "Narrative" divider:
- (1) The DCYF #114 is alphabetized. Forms are numbered and their location in the record is indicated. Forms in bold type (if applicable), should be present when a child is in placement;
 - (2) As material is incorporated into the record, this shall be so noted on the DCYF #114;
 - (3) Prior to transfer of any record, this form shall be reviewed by the worker and supervisor for completeness and accuracy as a part of the general record review for transfer:
 - (a) The presence or absence of specific material as noted on the form shall conform to existing policy or practice;
 - (b) The supervisor will seek assurance from the worker that all available case information is contained within the record and that additional or duplicate information is not in the personal possession of the worker; and
 - (c) Once the contents of the case record as noted on the DCYF #114 satisfy transfer criteria, the worker and supervisor shall sign and date the Case Record Audit.

Case Record Storage

Procedure From Policy 700.0065: Contents and Format for Departmental Record Keeping

- A. Case record binders can be stored in standard file cabinets (spine up) while the case is being actively serviced:
 - 1. Tab holders have been attached to the spine of each binder to display identifying case information; and
 - 2. Upon case closing the tab is removed from the holder and is stored in the "Special Forms/Documents" envelope.
- B. Because active cases opened to the Department prior to March 17, 1986 are not mandated to be converted to the hard cover three-ring (3) binder format (except where indicated within), these records shall continue, where applicable, to be stored in secure file systems.
- C. Regardless of how an active case record is stored, such storage shall be locked during non-work hours:
 - 1. Records must not be left on or in employees desks during non-work hours; and
 - 2. Records or sections of records must not leave the work site unless for approved work-related reasons as specified in policy. The reason the record is being requested and the time frame it is requested for must be clearly stated. In all cases final approval must be granted by the Unit Administrator or his/her designee.
- D. Closed case records, unless transferred for record consolidation to a concurrent worker, are removed from the binder (including dividers) and are placed in a manila folder for storage:
 - 1. Case identifying information is typed on a white gummed tab and is attached to the upper left corner of the manila folder;
 - 2. The seven-digit (7) RICHIST family root number is handwritten in ink in large, bold print on the upper right corner of the manila folder;
 - 3. The closed case record is sent to the DCYF Record Center for storage:
 - a. The Record Center will accept only complete records (no temporary or partial records) for storage; and
 - b. Temporary or partial records sent to the DCYF Record Center will be returned to the sender. It is the responsibility of that worker to ensure that this material gets incorporated into the permanent family record.
 - 4. As the majority of cases serviced in Family Services originate in Intake, binders for closed Family Services cases shall generally be returned to Intake for use in subsequent cases. However, those units responsible for the majority of their own openings (ex. Probation and MHSCY) shall retain the empty binders for subsequent use; and
 - 5. If the case becomes reactivated at a later date, a DCYF Record Center employee shall place the contents in an appropriate binder, take the tab from the "Special Forms/Documents" and place it in the folder and

forward the record to the appropriate individual. The manila folder in which the case was filed when closed should be three-hole punched and placed in the back of the hard cover three-ring (3) binder for re-use when the case is again closed.